

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2 and 4 – 12 are pending. Claims 3 and 13 – 16 have been canceled. The applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

On page 5 of the office action, dependent claims 15 and 16 were objected to, but indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form. Independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate claims 15 and 16, as noted in paragraph 13 of the office action. It is respectfully submitted that claim 1 as amended is allowable. Claims 15 and 16 were canceled. In view of the above, the applicant submits that the claims are patentable.

The applicant has rewritten the claims in independent form since the office action indicated that claims 15 and 16 would be allowable if so re-written. However, the applicant does not concede that other features in the claims are found in the prior art. The applicant wishes to clarify for the record, if necessary, that the claims have been amended to expedite prosecution. Any narrowing amendment to the claims in the present Amendment is not to be construed as a surrender of any subject matter between the original claims and the present claims; rather this is merely an attempt at providing one or more definitions of what the applicant believes to be suitable patent protection. In addition, the present claims provide the intended scope of protection that the applicant is seeking for this application. Therefore, no estoppel should be presumed, and the applicant's claims are intended to include a scope of protection under the Doctrine of Equivalents.

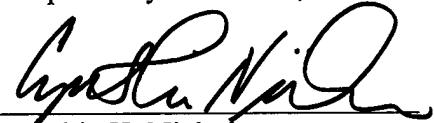
For all the reasons advanced above, the applicant respectfully submits that the claims as amended are allowable.

Claims 1, 2 and 4 – 14 were rejected under 35 USC 102(e) or 35 USC 103(a) as being anticipated by or unpatentable over various references. Because independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate allowable claims 15 and 16, and independent claims 13 and 14 have been canceled, it is respectfully submitted that the rejections are moot.

In view of the foregoing, the applicant submits that this application is in condition for allowance. A timely notice to that effect is respectfully requested. If questions relating to patentability remain, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone.

If there is any problem with the payment of fees, please charge any underpayments and credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 50-1147.

Respectfully submitted,



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